

# THE LEISURE HOUR

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AN UNEXPECTED CUSTOMER AT THE FORLORN SHOP.

## THE FORLORN SHOP; AND THE STORY OF ITS TENANTS.

### CHAPTER I.

ACCUSTOMED, as I have been, to pass through the same streets to the same office for nearly thirty years, it will be readily understood that I have become so used to the appearance of the thoroughfares that the slightest change will arrest my at-

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tention, and, in some sort, enlist my curiosity. These streets were familiar to me when the feeble lustre of oil preceded the brilliant flare of gas, when the upper floors of certain of the houses protruded over the shops, and when small panes of greenish looking glass performed the duty of those crystal sheets which are now so transparent as to be almost invisible. The whole aspect has changed; but changed so gradually that when I consider

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what it was not so very many years ago, I can scarcely believe that I am walking on the same pavement or even living the same life.

These old-fashioned reflections are, however, irrelevant to my story, the events of which I shall set down in the exact order of their occurrence.

There was one of those unlucky shops in my route which changed its tenants so regularly, and seemed so methodically to engulf their little fortunes, that, despite of myself, I could not restrain a feeling of pleasure when I found it had obtained such a reputation as to remain tenantless for a long time—for so long, indeed, that the paint on the shutters became blistered with the unaccustomed sun; and once, when a heavy shower of rain washed off the announcement of the vacuity of the premises, the proprietor seemed so hopeless of letting them at all, that for many weeks he did not think it worth while to put up a new notice.

One morning as I passed, the bill was down. In the evening as I returned from my office, I saw some furniture moving in. The "shop and parlour" were let once more.

A small hosier's it seemed. A few skeins of thread, some reels of cotton, strips of that button-hole work with which ladies amuse themselves, and a red flannel shirt placed in a conspicuous position in the window, comprised the whole stock. Passing the place daily, I think I am prepared to declare that for a whole year there was no one article removed from the window; the only noticeable alteration being that the red garment alluded to above, and which had been originally labelled as intended for Crimean wear, was temptingly dedicated in succession to the purposes of yachting, shooting, and cricketing.

One afternoon, an unexpected pressure of business, which could not be postponed, detained me at my office. The delay was irritating. I was afraid that my chop and kidney, which were always ready for me at one particular hour, would be overdone. I felt uncomfortable and out of sorts; and, to increase my annoyance, when I was descending the omnibus which sets me down at the bottom of the street in which I lodge, a woman, with a child in her arms, begged of me in a whining professional tone up to my very door. I answered briefly, snappishly; I had no sooner done so than I was sorry. I tried to excuse it to myself, but I couldn't succeed; the image of the woman haunted me. Apart from its being overdone, my dinner didn't agree with me, the evening newspaper remained unopened upon the table, my ideas perforce shaped themselves in one direction; so, as wiser men perhaps would have done under similar circumstances, I let them have their own way.

They rested on the little shop and the gay shirt: do what I would, I couldn't tear them away; there they remained, brooding, dreaming, forming themselves into such a possible picture of extreme poverty, that it was not until I had mentally promised to become the purchaser of the garment, and thus, to some extent, palliate the miseries which my fancies had imagined, that they suffered themselves to be soothed into an agreeable repose, and I subsided into my first sleep.

The following day, on my return from the office, I for the first time directly stopped before the modest window which I had before examined but by frequent and furtive glances. The door was bolted; but I shook it at intervals until the arrival of a young woman, who, in a fluttering manner, had scarcely admitted me, before she hastily retired into the parlour; whence she watched me through the intervening glass door.

I looked round; but the interior of the place was completely bare. The whole stock, and little it was, was in the window; elsewhere there was nothing, positively nothing. I was not startled, but grieved, and (if I may say it) in a manner awed. Here at least, in this town of shams, was one modest temple dedicated to a poverty which knew no blush; which, scorning the adventitious mask of seeming wealth, glared out of the empty shelves and naked walls fearless and unabashed.

In a few moments the pair of eyes which had been upon me were withdrawn, and a lady, quiet and self-possessed, passed through the door and stood on the opposite side of the narrow counter. She had a quiet, intelligent countenance, whilst the extreme oldness and neatness of her attire so far differed from the bare appearance of her shop, as to be an illustration of that genteel poverty, which follows like a curse upon the tramp of civilization. With the most perfect quietude she asked me what I wanted: as quietly, as softly, I pointed to the shirt.

After some little struggle with the pins (they had become damp and moulded in), which confined the garment to a line stretched across the window, she laid the former very gently upon the counter.

I took it up; the long exposure had stained it in places.

I laid it down doubtfully.

With nervous, fidgety fingers she endeavoured, by some re-arrangement, to conceal the discoloured folds: she saw it was useless, so, shaking her head very sadly, she let them drop, all of a heap as it were, down again.

I could feel the pair of eyes watching us through the glass door.

"Is this a stain?" I asked.

She flushed up very hot, but was silent. Why didn't she say it would wash out? Why didn't she make some excuse? But silence, complete silence.

"And the price?"

"Ten shillings," she said despondingly.

I took a sovereign from my purse and pushed it towards her; she took it up very quickly, then slowly putting it down again, pointed with her finger to the doubtful spot. "It is a stain," she said.

The tears were pushing up into my eyes, I could trust myself to say no more; I merely bowed.

She took the sovereign and went inside. I heard a scuffling, one inquiring for a bonnet, another for a shawl; then the young woman I had first seen, her face laughing over with smiles, passed out and presently returned with change.

During her absence, no word passed between her, who I afterwards found was the sister, and myself; no casual remark about the weather, no common-place observation; nothing.

It became evident that my purchase must be encased in paper; several pieces were tried, but each of them was too small, so the laughing sister took the half sovereign from her sister's hand and fetched a single sheet of brown paper from the stationer's opposite.

As she had taken the half sovereign to purchase an article which could only have cost a penny, the thought knocked in my heart, that they could have had no one coin in the house.

Promising, if I required anything more, I would again call, I left, and thus made my first introduction to the family, the sad tale of whose simple life it is my purpose to relate.

It would be as superfluous as tedious to recount how, by calling occasionally, either to make further purchases, or to recommend a new customer, I eventually established a better acquaintance; but it was not for some months that an unlooked-for incident initiated me into their perfect confidence.

I had called, I remember, to inquire after some fronts which the careful economy of the elder sister had insisted in inserting in some old shirts which my reckless extravagance was about to consign to disuse: contrary to the custom of the sisters, they kept me waiting for some time. When Mary (the elder) came at last, after attempting to preserve an unusual composure, she suddenly burst into passionate tears. The greatest griefs are expressed in the fewest words; the rent, just five pounds, was overdue barely three weeks; the landlord, a very cruel or a very careless man, which usually amounts to the same thing, alarmed perhaps by the unconcealed poverty of his tenants, had put in an execution. This intelligence attacked me in one of those weak moments in which, while we exalt human nature, we disgrace our civilization. I spoke to one of the men; well—there—in short I paid them out.

The younger sister, whose name was Ellen, was waiting for me the next morning with a request that I would take a cup of tea with them on the following evening; I felt so much interest in the family, that it was with no little pleasure I consented.

At the appointed time I found both sisters watching to welcome me in a genial homely way on the threshold; Ellen took my hat, while Mary led me through the mysterious glass door and handed me a chair in the parlour.

The latter was very small, but, oh, so clean! A Turkey carpet, the gaudy colour of which had long since disappeared, was too wide and not long enough for the white deal floor. A dressing-glass, taken from its supports and put longways, occupied the space over the mantelpiece, while over that again was suspended an exquisitely finished portrait, evidently of the young ladies' father. The chairs were old-fashioned and lumbering—heavy to lift, and uncomfortable to sit upon; but the tea service was of rare china, and must have been worth a great deal of money; and the sofa, I could perceive, was clumsily manufactured to conceal by day its too obvious purpose of a bedstead at night.

On looking round, I was surprised to find another occupant, an old lady, not perhaps old in years, but old enough to have outlived her faculties. She said

nothing, did nothing, but sat in an old-fashioned easy chair close to the fire, and amused herself by an incessant action of rubbing the palms of her hands upon her knees, her whole body keeping time with the motion.

The tea being over, Mary removed the things, while Ellen shut up the shop. A handsome decanter, with less than half a pint of the most filthy imitation of bad wine I think I ever tasted, was placed upon the table. After an awkward kind of pause, Ellen having returned and taken up some simple work, which was in a basket by her side, the elder, speaking in a practical common-sense way, told me how much she felt indebted for my generosity, as she termed it; that she would be able to repay the advance in a week, and so on. I stopped her at once. The annoyance of being thanked is enough to make one resolve never to do a kind action again. So I merely told her that if she would so far trust to my discretion as to reveal the whole nature of their position, I doubted not that I should be able to do something which would be of permanent benefit. Mary flushed up, and seemed to hesitate; but Ellen said, "Tell him *all*; *ours* isn't the sin; there is nothing *we* need to blush for." Mary still seemed unwilling, but at last she spoke. "I will tell all, all; you have indeed proved yourself a friend, and somehow I fancy, sir, you may aid us in our great trouble." I was fidgeting for my purse: Mary perceived the action: "It isn't money," she said.

"If I can help in any way——"

"You will, I know you will," interrupted Mary. The old lady still rocked herself in the chair. Ellen bent her head over her work, while her sister, looking me very earnestly in the face, began.

[To be continued.]

## THE MONTHS IN THE COUNTRY.

### DECEMBER.

"The wrathfull Winter 'proaching on apace,  
With blustering blast had all ybard the treene;  
And old Saturnus with his frosty face,  
With chilling cold had pearst the tender greene;  
The mantle rent wherein inwrapped beene  
The gladsome groves that now lay overthrowne,  
The tapers torne, and every love downe blowne;  
The soyle, that erst so seemly was to seeme,  
Was all dispoiled of her beautie's hewe,  
And stole fresh flowers (wherewith the Sommer's queene  
Had clad the earth), now Boreas blast downe blew;  
And small fowles flocking, in their songs did row  
The winter's wrath, where with each thing defest,  
In woefull wise bewayld the Sommer past:  
Hawthorne had lost its motley liverie,  
The naked twigs were shivering all for cold,  
And, dropping down the teares abundantlie,  
Each thing, methought, with weeping eye me told  
The cruell season, bidding me withhold  
Myselfe within."

So sings one of the oldest of our English poets, with a feeling of nature, and a power of observation, not too common among the bards of a later period. The above is a faithful description of approaching winter; but we do not always enter upon winter when we enter upon December, nor is it by any means a universal rule that, when November storms and fogs have blown off, the rigours of the cold

season begin. It frequently happens that a southerly wind will prevail for a good part of the December month, and in that case, notwithstanding the short days and the cloudy sky, the lapse into winter is very gradual indeed. The oaks and the plane trees have not yet parted with all their foliage, though, to be sure, the banners they hang out have a rather ragged appearance; and in a quiet mild day it is pleasant to wander in the woods, and crush the dead leaves under-foot, listening the while to the farewell notes of such of the song-birds as have not yet quite given over their fitful melodies. The woodlark, as well as the skylark, often sings merrily in December, and, so long as the weather is clear, and without any very sharp frost, you may hear the occasional note of the thrush sounding from some lofty invisible perch.

Whatever small sounds there are abroad at this season, strike distinctly on the ear, with a force that often surprises the listener: the chafing of the very smallest twigs one against the other as they are stirred by the wind, the flutter of the weakest wing of tiniest bird, the falling of a withered leaf—all are distinctly audible; nay, we have often heard the ticking of the watch in our pocket during a solitary woodland stroll on a winter's day. This telling effect of small sounds is doubtless owing to the clear stillness of the atmosphere; a stillness arising from the absence, almost complete, of all insect life, which in summer keeps it ever in motion by the fanning of unnumbered wings, whose indefinable humming sound is then pervading and incessant. Now, with very few exceptions, the insects are all dead or hibernating. The bees, both wild and hived, are in their snug quarters, living on the produce of their year's industry; the wasps are reaping the fruits of their idleness, crouching in a semi-torpid state in their holes, where the best part of them will die with cold or be devoured by their enemies before the warm spring sets them free to fight and plunder again. As for the flies, the cold has already killed most of them, and fungus, a disease to which the longest livers are liable, is finishing off the remainder. You may see them on old walls and windows, and on the leaves of evergreen plants, stuck fast by what appears a greyish-looking web, but which is, in fact, the destructive fungus generated in their own bodies, and which kills them by millions. The exceptions to this general fate are a few moths, such as the December moth and the herald moth, which are to be found in a half-lifeless state clinging to the trunks of trees, and not attempting to escape if touched, and a small tortoiseshell butterfly, called the witch's butterfly, which is seen sporting about merrily whenever there is a gleam of cheery weather, in spite of all December can do.

But by-and-by the last brown leaves have fallen from the trees, which now are seen utterly bare, and, as they stretch their lank lean arms supplicatingly towards the sky, you may, like the poet, fancy that they are passionately bemoaning their lost treasures, and

"Calling on Summer to come back again."

Now, the only foliage in the forest, save that of the evergreens, is of a very minute kind; it is the foliage—if foliage it may be called—of the mosses and lichens which begin to sprout and cover the bolls of trees, and the surfaces of stones, with rich hues of brown, green, olive and purple, just as the branches above are stripped perfectly bare. Some of these mosses are not only of exquisite beauty, but are useful to man as food or medicaments; others are food for animals; and some of the lichens are also eaten by the denizens of the forest, as the rock lichen of Lapland is by the rein-deer; while others have a commercial value, arising from the presence of certain chemical properties in their leathery-looking tissues. It is a beautiful provision which causes these parasitical plants to flourish most in the depths of winter; they add the charm of vivid colour to the otherwise bare landscape, and deck it with new beauties:—

"Pleasant to the sobered soul,  
The silence of the wintry scene,  
When Nature shrouds her in her trance  
In deep tranquillity.

"Not undelightful now to roam,  
The wild-heath sparkling on the sight;  
Not undelightful now to pace  
The forest's ample rounds,

"And see the spangled branches shine,  
And snatch the moss of many a hue,  
That varies the old tree's brown bark,  
Or o'er the grey-stone spreads."

But now the wind has veered round to the north, and from the north it has shifted to the north-east, and the blast blows bleak and frore; while the sky looks as though it were shut out by an interminable series of gauze curtains, one behind another, and all of a light leaden grey. For some days this aspect continues in the heavens, while the wind blows colder and colder, and elderly people begin to talk of the marrow freezing in their bones, and prophesying that it will not be warmer till the snow, which has been gathering aloft, is come down. And so it proves; for we wake some morning with a pleasant sensation of milder air, and on rising and looking out of the window, behold the world all white, under the first fall of snow. A spectacle, this, which everybody looks for in winter; but one which produces very different effects upon different classes. To the farmer it is welcome enough, for it will shield his young corn from the bleak winds, and give it heart and strength to stand the vicissitudes of the spring: to the rich man it is welcome, for it is the symbol of a thousand home comforts and fireside enjoyments, whose relish is enhanced by the severities of Nature out of doors. But to the poor the case is far different: to them, the first fall of snow is but the execution of a sentence which has been long impending over them, and which condemns them to sufferings hard indeed to be borne. In thousands of humble dwellings there is no store of fuel to meet the rigours of winter; and, often, in addition to the piercing cold, the inmates have to bear with the pangs of hunger, because work is scarce at this season when nothing can be done upon the land, and employment is now to be had.



In districts where coal is scarce and dear, the poor suffer a real martyrdom during the frosty months; and, were it not for the benevolent interference of their wealthier neighbours, the helpless among them might perish of famine. Many a poor labouring farm-woman, shut out from occupation by the snow, have we known to lie famishing all day under her ragged blanket, because, having no work, she had no fire to warm her; and, having no food, she could support hunger best in a prostrate position of body! Now is the time, my philanthropic friend, to unlock the stores of your philanthropy. Out with your coats, and gowns, and cast-off clothes; rummage up your cashiered blankets and counterpanes; see what you can spare from your cellar; put the biggest pot on the kitchen fire, stew down yesterday's joints with savoury vegetables, and issue your tickets for soup: for the want which cometh as an armed man *has* come upon the widow and the orphan, the poor and the helpless. And, mark me, oh! my friend, as surely as you are able to do it, so surely has the great God sent these poor and suffering creatures of his to you, that you may guide and support them in their hour of need, and do for them what they are neither wise enough nor strong enough to do for themselves. Mind, there is no mistake about that; there can be no mistake: *that* is your special mission just now, whether you have any other mission or no.

Not long after the middle of the month, country people begin to think about Christmas, and to prepare for it. Perhaps the first notice you will get of the near approach of the festive season will be the demand for holly and mistletoe and evergreens to deck the village church; and if your garden or shrubbery boasts any of these plants, you cannot well refuse your contribution. Then there will be the waits, who, if they do not pay you a visit before, will be sure to come on Christmas eve, or rather on Christmas morning, before the day is two hours old. No matter though the night be ever so fierce, with the storm driving the snow in heaps against the bank-side—the waits will face it, with flute and clarionet, fiddle and trombone, and a couple of good stout voices to boot, who will sing you some time-honoured carol. And when the carol is done, there shall be sonorous good wishes bellowed up out of the darkness, not only for you, but for every member of your family, down to the baby in long clothes; all of whom will be named at full length, as though the owner of the voice had written them down from the parish register—which perhaps he did—and all in vociferous connection with “a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.”

It has often struck us that Christmas day is not so merry a day in the country as it is among the dwellers in towns and cities; not that it is really less joyful, but that the joy is of a more sober and placid kind. There is the same morning service at the church for those who can attend, and the church in town or country is decorated much in the same way. But afterwards, at the festive board, there is a pensive element mixed up sometimes with the gaiety and hospitality of the hour. This may arise

out of the fact that the Christmas re-union in the country is almost invariably exclusively a family re-union, to which neither strangers nor friends who are not blood relations are bidden or expected; and that consequently those vacancies of exile or death which are so frequent and inevitable in all families, are more acutely felt than they would be in a mixed company. As year after year rolls by, some of the old familiar faces drop away from their accustomed seats—out of the atmosphere of household love and festive merriment,

“Into the silent land;”

and the place that hath known them, knows them no more. Whoever has attended the same Christmas dinner-table for a succession of years in a large family, has seen this—has marked the place so often filled, of

“The absent guest that never shall return!”—

and has felt, for a moment at least, how vain and powerless are the excitements to mirth when the heart is filled with melancholy. In cities, such casualties in the battle of life, though none the less frequent, make less impression at the Christmas board, because for the most part the guests are less intimately connected, and more rarely consist year by year of the same individuals.

At Tangley in December we find the out-door occupations still fewer than they were last month. What is chiefly to be done is to look well after the sheep in their pastures, and see that they are properly sheltered; to tend the young cattle in the sheds, and to care that all the live stock—horses, cows, pigs and poultry—want for nothing. About the homestead, the men and boys find work in cutting chaff, in fetching in hay, in slicing turnips, and administering the same to the hungry animals. Then there is the making up of sale-stock for the market, and the carrying it to Bilsbury for sale; and as for Mrs. Dobbs, she has plenty to do in preparing the bi-weekly batches of butter, for which at this season there is always a rather brisk demand upon her.

Christmas time finds Dobbs fully disposed to be generous and open-handed. He remembers something of the old-fashioned time when he was a boy, and he has no wish entirely to abrogate the old customs. It would be hard weather indeed that would keep him and all his household from church on a Christmas morning; and he would have no appetite for his own dinner afterwards if any of his dependants were in want of one. So, before he sits down with his guests in the parlour, he presides at the long tables in the kitchen; taking care that there is no stint either of beef or plum pudding, and heartily enjoying the prowess of the performers. There, at the lower end, sits Nelly Bunce, in a new brown stuff gown, which Dame Dobbs has bestowed as a Christmas gift, and with purple ribbons in her cap, which set off her weather-browned face to the best advantage. The face looks rather unctuous to-day, for Nelly, who has nothing at home but dry bread and cold cabbage, has been here all the morning, with Marion and old Giles's wife, up to her eyes in the cooking mysteries, and has not half cooled down yet. Billy, who has been looking forward to this day's dinner for this month past, is doing his best

to realize all his anticipations concerning it, and is setting an example in the gastronomic way, that would astonish a professional diner-out. There is very little talking during the momentous business of eating; and not till all are satisfied, and thanks are returned to the Giver of all good, and Dobbs has left them to their enjoyments, are the tongues let free to gossip. Then, while the women clear away, the old hands light their pipes and gather round the ingle, and the young ones sally out for a snow-ball battle in the farm-yard before it grows dark.

We shall not intrude upon Dobbs's family party, but while they are enjoying themselves shall take a farewell stroll about the farm. The snow is not deep on the land—some three inches or so—but it has been an even fall, with no drift to speak of, and has covered everything in its white mantle. It crunches crisply under the foot, flying in white dust from the slightest contact. It has greatly narrowed the channel of the little brook, whose waters show black and threatening as they swirl noisily onward between the spotless inclosures. Where the copse approaches the brook-side we come upon the track of a hare upon the snow, and following it for some fifty yards towards the withered fern, startle poor puss from her form as we are almost in the act of setting foot on her back. Off she scampers like a shot, making for the copse in galloping style. Her dash into the underwood puts up a woodcock, who goes whirling away like an arrow, vanishing in a moment or two from sight by a sudden dip into the wood. We cross the brook and stroll down to the marsh, where the pools are coated with thin ice, and which is just now the habitat of a huge flock of wild-fowl, all of whom have arrived since December set in, and of whom Dobbs will exact a life-rent for their quarters, by means of that long duck-gun of his, before they are many days older.

The sun is just touching the horizon, and, having veiled his face all day, gleams out redly at the moment of his farewell, making a golden pathway along the snowy pall that covers the land. The wild fowl, returning to their nightly lair among the reeds and flags, come in long sinuous shoals; their shining wings flashing back the glowing light, like a shower of dazzling meteors that kindle and disappear in a moment. The only sounds are the murmur of the brook, whose voice rings hollow and harsh, and the distant bleating of sheep in some far-off fold; with now and then the deep baying of some watchful mastiff, answered again and again by the echoing hills.

The short winter twilight soon draws to a close; the broad white sheet grows grayer and grayer, and the dark trail of the winding river deepens into black as the shadows of night descend upon the landscape. And now the cutting east-wind blows in sudden gusts, and the clouds which all day long had shut out the sun,

"Driven before the gale,  
Scurry through the sky;  
The darkness retiring rolls over the vale,  
And the stars in their beauty shine forth on high!"—

such stars and such beauty as one never sees at any other season of the year: all the visible con-

stellations come out with a clearness that seems like a new revelation of unutterable things; the evening star burns like a beacon; the milky way resolves itself into a marshalled host of distinct and definite fires. Now is the time to look for the lost Pleiad; or, if you choose rather to go comet-hunting, now may you sweep the heavens with your optic tube with the best chance of success.

But it is time to bring our rural rambles to a close. We have followed the year from its birth to its decline, and have traced, so far as our space would allow us, the varied phenomena of spring, summer, autumn and winter—and now we stand on the brink of the old year's grave. The last hours of 1859 are numbered, and to-night he shall be gathered to his fathers. The brief transition period that marks his peaceful death will be solemnized in various ways in this fireside-loving island of ours; for the festival of New Year's Eve is one which comes under a different aspect to different minds. The old year will be rung out from ten thousand of our time-honoured towers and steeples, and will be prayed out by many a devout listener to the midnight peal; it will be watched out in solemn silence by our Wesleyan friends, who will welcome the new year with a sacred song of cheerful acclamation; it will be feasted and rioted out at many a boisterous banquet; it will be played and diced out by the gambler; it will be drunk out by the slave of intemperance; and by thousands,

"Stretched in disease's shapes abhorred,"

it will be groaned out with throbs of agonizing pain. May the new year that is coming find each of us the wiser and the better for the probations of the old one that is passing away; and may all our years, be they few or many, fit us more and more for that transition time which will come for all of us, when we shall cast off the mortal and put on immortality.

#### HUNTING AND HAWKING IN ASIA MINOR.

PERHAPS one of the most prolific and varied fields for the lover of sport is that portion of Asia Minor which is comprised between the mountain passes of the Taurus to the north, and the Gulf of Scanderoon to the south-east. Herein is comprised Tarsus and Adana, two of the most noted towns of antiquity—the former especially. Who has not read of Tarsus, the birth-place of St. Paul? celebrated of yore, too, for its navies and its vast commercial enterprise. Now-a-days, it is famous for its fields of capers, which are exported to every part of Turkey, Syria, and Asia Minor. These capers grow wild and luxuriant, and possibly are the same that caused the Irish traveller to make the ludicrous blunder about fields of "anchovies"—an error only acknowledged after fighting a duel with an officer who had called his assertion in question. Tarsus is famous, moreover, for vast plains abounding with game of every description—plains that are boundless and fertile, yet uncultivated, intersected with shallow lakes and miry morasses, where assemble fleets of wild ducks and other web-footed water-fowl; where legions of

snipe cut the air in their sharp irregular flight, and the sky is literally darkened with game of all sizes and descriptions, whenever the sharp crack of the fowler's gun wakens the solitude with a hundred echoes; where also are higher plains and drier ones, sloping gradually towards the snow-crowned heights of the Taurus.

Somewhere about the above locality, when spring was yet young, or late in the equally mild and beautiful autumn, would assemble annually scores of well-mounted horsemen, armed, some with fowling pieces and pistols, others carrying hoodwinked falcons on well-gloved wrists, and some few contenting themselves with spears and hunting-knives of murderous aspect. We are going to have a "chasse battue" on a gigantic scale, and of a very varied and amusing character. Deer-stalking, wild-boar-spearing, coursing, wolf encounters, bear-shooting, and finally, though by no means least exciting, the fine old sport of "falconry," which at Tarsus is brought to such perfection that even the fleet gazelle becomes an easy prey to the keen-eyed and fleet falcon.

A motley but a most picturesque tableau do these "chasse battues" constitute, and worthy of the beauty of the scenery, which all about the Adana plains and the foot of the Taurus is exquisite beyond description. A palpable and a gay contrast are the moving features of this picture. Never were congregated in one spot, handsomer or fleetest steeds, the jealous pride and joy of their respective owners; neither are the specimens of the canine species one whit behind. Look at those elegant greyhounds; mark their bounding leap, their slim yet well-nerved limbs, and then say what poor timid "puss" can hope to elude those fleet pursuers; ay, or gazelle either, if the distance and ground only permit of a fair course. Besides these, there are many fine specimens of English, French, and Italian dogs; heavier in foot, but firm and irresistible in deadly struggle. But what is that which Mahomed Effendi, the wealthy and bigoted Aga from Adana, espies with unfeigned disgust and surprise, mingling familiarly with his own dogs? Oh, outraged decorum! it is "a tame wild boar" fraternizing with the natural enemies of his race. He is keener of scent than the rest of the "dogs," and is the freak of a mad-brained Englishman, who, with immense patience and perseverance, has managed to rear it almost from its dam, and so well instructed it in the art of sport, that "Billy," as he is called, will ferret out more game in a day than many of our best English setters. Even our Mahomedan friends are so surprised by the spectacle of his exploits, that they actually countenance and encourage the "Learned Pig."

Amongst the horses there is one, fleet as the wind but restive and mad-eyed withal. It requires no little horsemanship on the part of the rider to keep his seat, and curb the fiery spirit of this Arabian. Yet the horse is meagre and rather unsightly to the eye, though this evidently arises from some strange malady with which the poor animal is afflicted, and whereby hangs a most alarming tale, if we are to credit what the terrified syce, or groom, attributes the disorder to.

During spring and summer, the horses in Syria and Asia Minor are kept out day and night in the open fields—rain seldom falling at that season, and the night dews seem to do them no harm. As sure as the morning arrives, this particular horse presents the strange spectacle of being covered with a profuse perspiration and foam, precisely as if it had just come off a long journey and a hard gallop. That such is the fact, and that the circumstance is not attributable to disease, Abdallah the groom asserts by the faith of the prophet and by his own beard; and, looking round cautiously, lest the party referred to should be at his elbow, he tells us in a mysterious whisper that it is a "Gin,"\* that takes nocturnal exercise, and that he (the syce) has with his own eyes witnessed the horrible feat of equestrianism, when the night was very dark and the atmosphere ghostly. With such an appendage to its character, woe to the rider of the sickly horse. It so chanced that an unhappy French skipper (fortunately for himself fourteen stone weight,) bestrides this haunted quadruped; and, of a truth, his is a sorry day's pleasure.

But to return to the picturesque. What can surpass or rival the grotesque yet gaudily costumed group assembled on these verdant plains of Adana? There sits the venerable old Ali Effendi, all turban and fur cloak as to apparel, all beard and keen eyes as to features. In the height of summer or in the depth of winter you shall still find Ali Effendi in the self-same identical costume; his argument, (and doubtless a wise one where the two extremes of heat and cold prevail,) being that what excludes cold is equally effective against heat. There are to be seen blue coats and furs, red caps and yellow boots, Persian caps, straw hats, head-gear of all descriptions, and costumes of every nation, from the exquisite Greek Chellibi, who is all gold lace and perfume, down to plain John Brown in cut-away coat; or, further still down the ladder, Sheik Kachin, whose exceedingly primitive costume is perhaps best adapted to the nature of the climate and the sport there engaged in.

After alighting for awhile to partake of some refreshment, to fortify us against the fatigues of the day—a repast which varies from the bread, cheese, and bottled stout of John Bull, down to the sour cream and garlic salad of Howajah Bustros—winding up invariably with pipes of tobacco, strong coffee, and amongst the Europeans, stronger *cognac de vie*—the word to mount is given, and a certain rendezvous being agreed upon, we scatter ourselves in all directions, accompanied by scores of fellahs or peasants on foot, who, armed with cudgels, beat the bushes, and shout lustily enough to startle the most daring of forest denizens.

Then commences the "chasse battue." Usually an extensive circle is formed, until within their sweep forest and field, mountain and plain are comprehended; then, by preconcerted signal, the work of the day commences. It is all a matter of uncertainty what first turns up. Sometimes a splendid antler breaks through all rule or order; and, in such

\* "Gin," an evil spirit.—(Arab.)





A HUNT ON THE PLAINS OF CILICIA.

instances, all within sight or hearing at once quit their respective stations, and away we go—dogs baying, men hooting, horse-hoofs clattering over stony dell or plain; up hill-side and down hill-side; scaring everything as we fly along, but heeding nought save the fleet victim of which we are in pursuit.

The stag is captured, and weary winded horsemen and horses rest awhile. About this period of the day, Lieutenant Windsail, of the British schooner "Tally-ho," and the French Captain La Marine, compare notes as to their comparative excellence in equestrianism; and it is then that they candidly acknowledge to half a dozen capsize apiece, besides stiffness and uncomfortable sensations, from being glued to the saddle for a couple of hours, whilst the horses have been pitching and rolling tremendously.

The cry of "Doughus!"—A wild boar! acts like an electric spark upon the repose party. Pipes are thrown aside, saddles vaulted into, and away we fly, helter-skelter, after the grunting tusker, who assuredly, for a pig, makes good use of his heels,

or—what shall I call them? *pettitocs*. Half an hour's riding brings most of us within shot of the swiney fugitive. The first bullet renders him restive; the second savage. Some reckless dog yells beneath the excruciating plunge of its well-sharpened tusks; but a few minutes afterwards, a well-directed spear sprawls the bristly monster all gory upon the field, and the fight is won. All honour to the Mahometan victors; all pig be our reward. They admire the beast, but we will eat him.

The most marvellous thing in the *chasse battue* is the fact that everybody does not kill or maim his neighbour in the rush and excitement of the moment. People fire high, low, and on all sides. As far as the hapless dogs are concerned, it often happens that they meet with more damage than the victims they are supposed to victimize.

So the day passes—sport varied by sport. Sometimes it is a catastrophe in the shape of a broken-kneed horse and broken-nosed cavalier; sometimes a dreadful catastrophe, in the form of a crash amongst the eatables and drinkables, which



have been left in saddle-bags on mule backs; which mules, being fly-bitten and exhausted, have indulged in a roll upon the grateful warm turf, destroying many a pleasant perspective with regard to the afternoon's entertainment. Luckless hares have been coursed and captured; frakolin, ducks, and endless game have been bagged, and the day's entertainment winds up with falconry. An unwary gazelle has been entrapped between two mountain sides; she has but one channel of exit, and that leads her right past the post occupied by the falconer. The unhooded bird soars high in the air, and swift as lightning sweeps through the intervening space, and alights on the head of the terrified gazelle. The bird's talons are firmly fixed in the poor brute's forehead; the hawk's wings, flapping, blind and stupify her in her flight; finally, she staggers, and is overcome by overpowering and relentless dogs.

We have been fourteen hours on horseback, and have ridden many a hard mile. When our friends, the ship-masters, are lifted out of their saddles (they held out bravely so long as the excitement lasted), they are fairly on their beam-ends. Not all the allurements of fine weather, sport, and good company, will cajole them into exchanging the main deck for a true-bred Arab's back again—no, not for long years to come.

#### ALMANACKS.

AMID all the changes of fashion and the inventions of modern days, nothing can supersede these useful and necessary little "pocket companions," which are as much in request now as in the days of our great-grandfathers. In an entertaining article which appeared some time ago in the "British Quarterly Review," on "Kalendars and old Almanacs," we are reminded that their history is very amusing as well as suggestive, throwing great light on the customs of our ancestors. Among the earliest illuminated MSS. we find the calendar which was prefixed to the most ancient church books. "King Athelstan's Psalter," believed to have been written as early as the year 703, has, in addition to the calendar, lunar tables; and rude representations of the various agricultural labours of the year are found in many of the Saxon calendars: so that the inquirer who would desire to enter the very homes of our forefathers, and learn how they worked and how they feasted; how comfortably they sat over their blazing log-fires in January; how toilsomely they dived and ploughed in March; how pleasantly in May they disported themselves in the green meadows; how, in August, they gathered the harvest, and in September the apples or the vintage, owes no small tribute of gratitude to the illuminators of the ancient calendar, more especially those from the eleventh to the fourteenth century.

These calendars are also exceedingly valuable as illustrating the history of Art, and it is not unfrequently the case that, only from some specific entry or date found in them, can the age of the MS. or the name of the owner be ascertained. Thus, the

splendid prayer book of Charles the Bold is authenticated by the entry of the baptism of his eldest son, and thus a beautiful missal contained in the Egerton Collection is proved to have belonged to Mellisenda, the queen of Jerusalem, from the notice of the death of her father, Baldwin the second, and of her mother, being inserted in the calendar.

The Royal Library of France contains a rich treasury of these precious MSS., of which the most rare, curious, and beautiful is the missal called "The Hours of Anne of Brittany," which is accounted the most valuable of all the volumes in that marvellous collection; so great being the store set upon it that, as Mr. Dibdin assures us, "not even the wishes and regulations of royalty itself allow of its migration beyond the walls of the building." Prefixed to this choicest of volumes is the calendar, which occupies a space of six inches by four, completely inclosed by a coloured margin. In one of the winter months is observable a very puerile imitation of flakes of snow, falling over the figures and the landscapes below. Then follows a series of the most beautiful ornaments of flowers, fruits, insects, etc., for which the illuminators of that period were often eminently distinguished. Mr. Dibdin describes them as being of exquisite perfection. "It is really impossible," he says, "to describe many of them in terms of adequate praise. The downy plum is almost bursting with ripeness; the butterfly's wings seem to be in tremulous motion, while they dazzle you by their varied lustre; the airy insect puts every muscle and fibre into action, as he insinuates himself within the curling of the crisped leaves; while these leaves are sometimes glistening with dew, or coated with the finest down. The flowers and the vegetables are equally admirable and equally true to nature. Assuredly, these efforts of art have no rival of their kind."

Our readers will scarcely credit that in this gem of a volume—the gift-book of the twice-crowned queen of France—the favourite illustration of the Flemish illuminators, that most revolting of subjects, pig-killing, should find a place. Yet there, finished with the delicate minuteness of a Teniers, is a fat pig, hung up by a stout staple by its hind legs, its throat just cut by a very complacent-looking butcher, while a neat-handed Flemish damsel, with coif and apron white as snow, is gleefully holding a huge earthen dish, evidently indulging in pleasant anticipations of future black puddings. What a dainty picture "to set before a queen," and how illustrative of that coarseness of taste which has characterized the Flemish school through every period of its artistic history. Very different are the Italian illustrations of the calendar; a very pretty idea is found in the missal of King René. In addition to other illustrations, each page of the calendar has a beautiful little bird perched at the top, the nightingale representing May, while robin-redbreast ushers in December.

While much information may be derived from these pictorial illustrations, these calendars also supply many curious examples of the superstitions and popular opinions of our forefathers. In some of them are astronomical tables, with beautifully

finished illuminations. Occasionally we find prognostications respecting the weather, and, what is interesting, among them are many sayings couched in rude rhymes, French or English, which still keep their place in the popular mind. The well-known distich,

"Evening red and morning gray,  
Is the sign of a fine day."

is found in a calendar of the fifteenth century; and the equally well-known rhyme of the "rainbow in the morning" is also of frequent occurrence. These mediæval calendars likewise supply many curious illustrations of the superstitions of the vulgar, in the tables of lucky and unlucky days, in the medical and dietetic advice, and in the miscellaneous remarks they supply. However varied the general information they contain, they are almost certain to insist upon the necessity of frequent bleeding and constant physickings. No month is without its rules, specifying the most approved food, drink, and medicine; and from the homely character of much of the information they contain, as well as from their being in the vernacular tongue, it is thought not unlikely that, in the flourishing towns of England, France, and Flanders, most of the well-to-do burghers possessed a calendar, which was doubtless, in most cases, prefixed to the prayer book.

The very first book with a certain date was an almanack, presented by John Guttenberg of Mayence, in 1456. Before long, the eagerness for almanacks was universal, and they became the most popular manuals of instruction. Among the French almanacks still published, and widely circulated, is one which claims an antiquity of more than three hundred and fifty years, called "*Le Calendrier des Bergers*," which, by means of strange hieroglyphical signs, supplies the unlettered peasant of the south of France with directions for each day throughout the year. M. Nisard, in his "*Histoire des Livres Populaires*," has given two pages of this most curious little volume, just as it was printed in 1852; and a stranger specimen of an almanack of the nineteenth century could not possibly meet the eye. Most strange and arbitrary signs indicate the days of the month, and inform the reader which is Sunday, and which holiday; a kind of pyramid marks the working day; a circle with a cross inside, the day of physic-taking; while a very strange star, of frequent occurrence, points out the proper day for bleeding. So simple a calendar as this may easily have been in use among the peasantry centuries before the invention of printing.

Mr. Dibdin, in his "*Picturesque Tour*," gives an amusing example of the implicit credulity with which the poor folk receive the instructions contained in these strange directories. He says: "I purchased (at Ulm) a couple of copies of the '*Almanac Historique, nommé le Messager Boiteux*,' a quarto publication, printed in the sorriest chap-book manner, at Colmar, and of which the fictitious name of *Antonie Souci, Astronome et Hist.*, stands in the title-page as the author. A woodcut of an old fellow with a wooden leg and a letter in his

right hand, is intended to grace this title-page. 'Do you believe,' said I to the young woman who sold me the book, 'what the author of this work says?' 'Yes, sir, I believe even more than what he says,' was the instant reply of the credulous vender of the tome."

Among ourselves, calendars and almanacks were probably as much in requisition, and as early as on the continent. Some of the earliest among them dealt amply in astronomical and still more amply in astrological observations, coupling the fates of men and nations with the movements of the stars and the heavenly bodies. Such was the belief of our forefathers, and among them many pious men, so that we are told, "God-fearing men sought anxiously for a 'fortunate day' for Queen Elizabeth's coronation." The favourite motto of such was,

"Astra regunt homines, sed regit astra Deus."  
[The stars rule men, but God rules the stars.]

Towards the close of Elizabeth's reign, almanacks appear to have become a necessity for all classes; and at the beginning of the following reign there were at least a dozen enjoying a wide circulation. All these little books contained the calendar and the changes of the moon, with prognostications for the four quarters of the year (always vague enough), and ample dietetic and medical directions. "Notwithstanding the astrological jargon, and their amusing lists of the wholesomes and unwholesomes, these little handbooks contain an amount of general information far greater than the reader who has formed his opinion of these times from popular histories would expect. There is always a table of historical events, ancient and modern, fairly correct; a complete list of market towns in England, with their distances from London; sometimes a list of the cross-roads also. Then, we have a table of 'distances of some of the most famous cities in the world from the honourable city of London;' among these we find Jerusalem, Mexico, and 'the famous city of Calicut;' Nineveh and Babylon also take their place in this table, and we smile to read that the latter is just 2710 miles off! But geographical knowledge was very unsettled then; still, that the trader and the farmer should seek to know aught about these far-off lands, shows how widely the spirit of inquiry had spread. The astronomical tables are mostly very full. In several, the method of determining the rising of the star, of taking the altitude of the sun, and of drawing the meridian line, are given. The various changes in the heavenly bodies are frequently noted, too, without the slightest allusion to their benign or sinister aspect on our mundane affairs; while the phrase, often used, 'that beautiful planet, Venus,' seems to show that even the almanack maker of those days felt that the stars were, indeed, the 'poetry of heaven,' and a beauty no less than a mystery."

In the time of the Puritans, the almanacks were strongly marked with the religious character of the age. As might be expected, there was a great deal of common-place in the moralizing they contained, and the poetry mostly very prosaic. One admirable exception is given in the Review from

which we have been quoting, and we cannot resist extracting it for the benefit of our readers:—

- "In glory thou in heaven art, in mercy here below,  
In judgment with the demon-crow, the seas thy wonders show;  
Yet sea, nor earth, nor heavens hie, thy essence can contain;  
Thou art, hast bin, and ever shalt, I AM of might remain.
- "It is not wealth, nor Ophir-gold, that can enrich our need,  
Nor pleasing dainties that we take that can our bodies feed;  
It is thy blessing from above, thy strong protecting arm  
That feeds, protects thy children dear from penny and harm.
- "Eternal King! immortal God! all kingdoms are thine own;  
Thy power, thy wisdom, and thy might, to us doth make thee  
KNOWN;  
All honour, glory, praise, and laud, be rendered thee by men,  
Unto thy sacred majesty, for evermore, Amen."

These noble lines are from "Evans' Almanack for 1630," a manual well written, full of good advice and of general information. A curious chapter might be written on the political almanacks which, during the civil war, almost superseded every other, and when "the astrologer played in England well nigh as important a part as he did in Wallenstein's army."

But, passing these, we note "Poor Robin," a most amusing "new almanack, after the old fashion," (date 1733,) which, beside the usual astronomical and other matter, contains a twofold calendar, namely, "the honest, true-hearted, Protestant account, with the martyrs for pure religion on the one side, and those who were justly executed for plotting treason and rebellion on the other." "Poor Robin" was, in his day, the delight, the counsellor, and the guide of the east-country folk. They made love and beer by his directions, wooed the sweetheart and tapped the barrel in the assigned planetary hours; and his calendar is the great treasure-house for allusions to local customs and popular sports.

How much are men alike all the world over! We are not, therefore, surprised to learn that the almanacks of far remote nations pander in a similar manner to the requirements of superstition and credulity. For example: the Persian almanack, we are told, is a mixture of astronomy and judicial astrology, "containing an account of the conjunctions, oppositions, aspects, longitudes, latitudes, and, in short, the whole disposition of the heavens. It contains, also, prognostics of the most notable events, as famine, war, plenty, diseases, and other accidents of human life, with the lucky or unlucky times for transacting all manner of affairs, directing the people to regulate their conduct accordingly. What is most observable," concludes our historian, "is, that though there are great numbers of these almanack-makers, and though they frequently disagree in their astronomical calculations, as well as their predictions, they are, nevertheless, looked upon as infallible—a thing scarcely to be credited, if we had not some examples of the same kind nearer home."

Even in this "enlightened" age, the almanacks which appeal to credulity and superstition have a large sale, although works of the class containing ten times the amount of sound and useful information are within everybody's reach. Among these, none are better than the Almanacks published by the Religious Tract Society, the scientific portion

of which is prepared by James Glashier, Esq., F.R.S., of the Royal Observatory, at Greenwich.\*

## BERTHA; OR, SMILES AND TEARS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN, BY MARY HOWITT.  
CHAPTER V.

It was night; the father was not yet come home; the mother slept, and Bertha sate alone, still occupied by her ceaseless needlework, when she fancied she heard a low lamenting moaning. She listened, and heard the sound more distinctly; it came from the upper floor, which she had supposed uninhabited. There was something almost ghostly in the sound, thus heard at night, but she resolved not to waken any one below. Perhaps one of the servants of the house slept above. She accordingly took her light, and with difficulty ascended the stairs which led in the direction of the sound. She came to a garret, the door of which she opened with difficulty, and there found an old woman lying upon a very poor but clean bed, and who was evidently in great suffering.

"Can I help you in any way?" inquired Bertha, timidly.

"Ah! that's the young miss from below," said the old woman, as she raised herself; "then you have heard my stupid noise, and are woke up by it! I would not have done so if I had known it would disturb you; but to-day I was in such dreadful pain that I thought I would just try if groaning would ease me a little; but oh! it has done me no good!"

"Cannot I do something for you?" again asked Bertha; "I was not in bed, I assure you."

"Ah, to be sure, dear miss; if I could only have a drink of water, the fever parches me up so; I generally fetch some in; but to-day I came home so badly I could not do it."

Bertha hastened to procure for her this refreshment, which evidently revived her.

"Ah, God reward you, miss," she said; "what a fortunate thing it was that you heard me; yes, I shall now again be all right;" and she laid herself back contentedly on the pillow, which Bertha had shaken up and smoothed for her. "Thank you, miss, that is too much. But is it not a good thing? and what a blessing it is!"

"What is amiss with you? Cannot I bring you anything else?" asked Bertha, kindly; "would not you like a little soup?"

"Thank you, miss," she said, "but nothing will stay on my stomach; it is the cancer, the doctor says, and I do not venture to take anything but a drop of coffee or water; they are best for me."

"I will bring you some coffee in the morning," said Bertha; and she placed the water by her bed.

\* THE PEOPLE'S ALMANACK for 1860. Thirty-two pages, with Engravings, 1d. Containing matters necessary to be known by all classes.

THE CHRISTIAN ALMANACK for 1860. Containing much Astronomical and other information of popular interest. Frontispiece, 6d. in neat cover; 8d. superior cover; 1s. 4d. half-bound and interleaved.

THE SHEET ALMANACK for 1860. Price 1d.

THE TRACT SOCIETY PENNY ALMANACK. In a small book, Price 1d.

"God reward you, miss; I'll accept it thankfully in the morning; for the rest, I have made preparation, even though I should never get up again; for I have long known that it must come. Would you, however, just do me one little kindness, if I am not asking too much: read me my evening thanksgiving, for I have no light."

She pointed out to Bertha the place in the book; and though the pain she still suffered contorted her features, she watched with a bright and comforted glance the moving lips of Bertha, from which the well-known words seemed to come with renewed emphasis to her heart. At every passage which expressed gratitude for divine benefits, she nodded her head as in deep conviction, and spoke the "Amen" with a clear voice. Bertha heard below the return of her father, and said a hasty "good-night."

The splendid bride and the poor woman on her bed of suffering mingled strangely in her dreams that night.

When Bertha awoke, she did not at first know what there was to make her feel cheerful. Ah, yes, she had promised to take the old woman some coffee. She related to her mother the discovery of the night before, and received from her a ready acquiescence. "When we were at home, we used to have plenty of milk, and did not need to begrudge anybody a drop!"

The old woman welcomed her joyfully. Bertha inquired how she had slept.

"Not at all, miss; I've been very bad; I was ready to try groaning again; but it is so fortunate for me that I learned so many beautiful passages of scripture and hymns by heart in my younger years; these I prayed all through, and whole half sermons that I have heard come sometimes to my mind. Towards morning, however, the pain left me, and I have slept beautifully since six o'clock. Such sleep does one good; when one wakes, one thinks one has been asleep the whole night!"

"Are you, then, so entirely solitary?" asked Bertha.

"A lone, childless widow, with nobody but our dear Lord!" replied she, with a tone of consolation; "and yet I have been always quite sure that he would send me somebody when I had need of help. I always have at the right time just what I want."

"But you ought to have the doctor," said Bertha. "My cousin is servant in this town; she will come and look after me when I can no longer get out, and she can fetch the doctor; but some doctors know very little. She'll be coming before long," she continued; "you see she is my heir."

Bertha's eyes involuntarily followed those of the sick woman, which seemed to take a satisfactory survey of the contents of the chamber—a three-legged stool, a large old chest, and the bed—and she could not help smiling.

"You are thinking that it is not much," said the old woman: "open that chest there, and look what beautiful linen I have; and besides that, three pieces of cloth, all honestly and honourably worked for; yes, they'll find, after all, that I have something to leave. But I would a great deal rather that you would take the key and keep it; I should not

like Lina to have it while I am alive. In that white cloth, which is pinned up, will be found everything necessary to lay me out in when I die. The money necessary for burying me is also there; that must not be touched till the time required. Rather than that should happen, I would send to the ladies for whom I have washed; they would not let me want at the last moment; but, as for that, the dear Lord will not drive me to such an extremity."

At the very bottom of the chest she had a little store of coffee and sugar, soap, and other small necessities, together with her little hoard of money, because she had long known from the doctor that the time would come when she could no longer go out to work. How cordially she now rejoiced over her little treasure, and with what a comforted heart she looked forward to death, through the portals of which she must so soon convey her *true* possessions!

Lina, the cousin in service, was a servant of the modern school, dressed in *mousselin de laine*, with a straw reticule and parasol in her hand. She came once a week, looked across the bed, said a few commonplaces, and then went away again. This doctor did not, in fact, as the old woman said, know a great deal, and came seldom. All the more necessary and consolatory, therefore, were Bertha's attention and kindness to the poor sufferer, and Bertha felt herself most beneficially influenced by the cheerful patience with which she awaited death through the severest sufferings. She was always in good heart, and always found some cause or other for thankfulness.

"Mine is really a sickness for poor folks," said she jokingly, one day, when she literally could scarcely take any food. "Only think now, if, instead of this disease, I had been suffering from one which made me ravenous for food! I once knew a man who craved every quarter of an hour a different kind of food; now, what should I have done in his case?"

Bertha was a most conscientious steward of her little hoard, and the good old woman was delighted to see it go so far. "I don't think that our dear Lord will so deal with me as to reduce me to beggary," she said; "I will not, however, be proud; but it would be wonderfully comfortable to my feelings if he would take me home before it came to that pitch."

"Have you always, then, been in good circumstances, Catherine?" asked Bertha, one day; for to her this unvarying contentedness was a perfect riddle.

"No, not always in what people call good circumstances; but I have always had exactly what I wanted. I will tell you all about it some day."

We will here give, in a connected form, this simple story, which Bertha received in a more fragmentary manner.

#### THE HISTORY OF ONE WITH WHOM THINGS FELL OUT AS SHE NEEDED THEM.

My father was a poor day-labourer in a village. I cannot call him a peasant-farmer, though we had a little cow and a field or two; but I am glad that I was brought up in a country village, because poor children in a town have so very few enjoy-



ments. And now I am glad also to remember that we were poor, because the poor value all things so much more than the rich. Rich people have so many things to vex them, and so little pleasure. The rich farmer holds back his corn from the market till it is dear enough to satisfy him, and if the price falls, he is almost out of his mind. As for us, you should have seen what a joy we had when we brought home our little bit of barley, and ate bread of our own corn; and when we had a good apple crop, or when the cow calved, was there not a joy? When I look back to those times, it seems to me as if there was nothing but happiness; all the rest has been long forgotten. And I had God-fearing parents, and that is a blessing for a lifetime. In this respect I was more fortunate than thousands of rich children. When one has so little that one does not know how one is to find food for the second half of the year, and yet, when the whole twelve months have gone round, and one has not died of hunger, it is like the working of a miracle, and one takes renewed courage.

I did not know for a long time how good it was at home. In my tenth year I went to be a nurse with a peasant-farmer's wife. It was not exactly what I wished for; but it was what I needed, and there I learned to bestir myself and use all my faculties. Shortness of food I never knew there; and one mouth the less to feed was a relief to my parents. Whenever I saw my mother carrying home bread, I used to feel so happy to think that they had my share to eat. Our parents died early, in honour and peace; we children buried them decently, and the clergyman preached a sermon for them. After this I went, as it were, from pillar to post, to all sorts of service, just such as I needed in all ways, and last of all to the old landlady of the "Star," in B—, who had the character of changing her servants once a week. If I imagined that I had been before knocked about, I had now to learn a different lesson. But I thought to myself, when I entered her service, "Now here I mean to stay, and I shall just see which can stand it out longest, she or I." And I held it out the longest, (continued the old woman, with a hearty laugh); I lived with her twelve years, and the old landlady treated me like her own child. Of course, you understand, she could box her own children's ears! When she died, she left me a hundred gulden down, a handsome bed and a chest. Now, don't you think that was good luck for such a poor wench?

After this it would have been better to have again gone out to service, especially if I could have found another mistress like the old landlady of the "Star." But then came my husband, who was a butcher, and would have no nay, but I must marry him. It might have been put off, but still I should have wanted it, and it is such a rare thing now-a-days for a poor girl to get a husband. But it was a great delight to me when we went to a house of our own, and one way and another I passed many a happy hour there—our Lord be thanked and praised for it!

If I should now say that my husband were not

rough and churlish, I should not speak the truth; but that might come from his trade, but he did not begin at once his worst. He had a pleasure in our first lad, that makes me cry when I think of it; but his trade did not flourish; we had not capital enough; he took to living too much from home, and also to drinking. Those were anything but good times, dear miss; but the harder they were, the more help from God I experienced. Oh! nobody who has nothing but prosperity knows what it is, when one feels one's self alone in the whole world, to hear a voice saying in one's heart, "Fear not, I am with thee!" And it would have been a great deal worse with my husband, if God had not enabled me always to meet him with gentleness, and perhaps all might have been again right had he not fallen into bad company.

I was the mother of four children, all of whom died one after the other: I would have been very willing to have gone with them, but God did not then want me.

One fine morning my husband set off and left me. It was unkind of him, and at first it seemed to me harder to bear than death itself; but, after all, it was a blessing that he was not taken off in his sin. I was still able to pray for him, so that, when he was dead, I knew not but that my prayers might have helped him.

Thus, I was left alone with one little lad, and a good lad he was, but weakly. Of my household gear, not a stick remained; however, I then began the washing, and you can have no notion what a nice living I was able to make in that way. Frequently, when I came home at nine o'clock at night, from a day's washing, I would begin again at home and wash till one o'clock in the morning, for single gentlemen, and again at the wash-tub early in the morning. I would not spare anything for my lad; he had as good schooling as a prince. And he took to his learning so readily. Oh, you should have seen his writing-books!

It is a great good fortune when people are fond of their business—and there is nothing more beautiful than washing! I have often thought to myself, the most elegant ladies do nothing but make their beautiful clothes dirty; but thou makest them beautifully white! And when dirty things have come into my wash-tub, and afterwards have hung out in the fresh air like driven snow, my very heart has laughed in my body; and when I have heard people say, in passing by, "That is a beautiful wash; it can be no other than the butcher's wife, Catherine!" I don't think that the joy I then felt could be a sin.

My lad was confirmed; the clergyman was so pleased with him! I wanted him to be apprenticed to a trade, but he would hear of nothing but being a watchmaker. That seemed to me like pride; but he was so remarkably clever with his hands, that the clergyman recommended it. God be thanked and praised that I let him have his way! I sold my garnet necklace and my silk wedding apron, for the first payment of the apprentice fee. Oh, how delighted the poor lad was when he first went into the room where was such a number of watches; the remembrance has made me happy all my life.

And he would have been, the master often said, the cleverest watchmaker he ever saw; but the dear Lord knew better what he was fit for, and made an angel in heaven out of him. And he made such a beautiful Christian end, it would have done any person, much older than himself, good to have witnessed it. He carried out the conclusion of his confirmation questions, and prayed at the very last, quite plainly, "Lord Jesus, in thee I live, in thee I suffer, in thee I die; thine I am, whether dead or living; make me, oh Jesus, eternally happy, Amen!"

Thus I was left alone in the world; but it has not been too hard for me. People with the best intentions in the world, who have many good things on earth, have often a great deal of difficulty to lift their hearts into heaven; but the dear Lord made it very easy to me; for I had five angels already in heaven, who were all waiting for me.

About two years ago a person from America brought me a message from my husband, who had died in a hospital in New York. And he prayed me, for the love of God, to forgive him, for he had come plainly to see what he owed me. If things had gone on better with him there, he would have returned home. Now, therefore, if he was brought to a knowledge of what were his duties towards me, there is no doubt but that he repented before God.

Thus God has taken from my heart this anxiety also, and I can die peacefully. And that he has sent to me such a kind young lady before my death, to take such good care of me, is what I should not have been bold enough to ask for; I should have been willing to have died alone, if He had thought well; but he has done much better, blessed be his name.

Such, in substance, was the story of the poor laundress. As to her worldly concerns, she expressed but one wish: "If I could only once more do a good wash! I can't think who is to take it after me." This wish was never to be fulfilled, and she consoled herself by hoping that "they would take Liese, whom she would be so glad to oblige, and if she did not do everything quite right at first, she would be sure to learn in time." Lina promised to take her greeting to all her ladies, and ask them not to engage their washing to another till they had given Liese a trial.

Thus died the old laundress, true to her calling, like a dying general on the field of battle, who still issued his commands with the bullet in his heart.

She left to Bertha the rosemary and the carnation in her window. "You'll find them a joy all the year round, miss," she said. She also gave to her kind nurse the bible which had belonged to her lad; and not long after she fell into a quiet sleep, from which she never awoke.

## A CHAPTER ABOUT EELS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "CURIOSITIES OF NATURAL HISTORY."  
THE working classes in London have a great advantage over the *ouvriers* of Paris, as regards their having "fish for dinner" every now and then. Fish is not a very portable article of food, and will not keep long; so that the London costermongers

are often able to buy up, and sell again at small prices, the superfluous fish left in Billingsgate market, after the regular fishmongers have purchased as much as they want for the day. Fish, as a rule, do not live more than a few minutes out of water; but there is a fish, the eel, which remains alive for many hours, and even days, in atmospheric air, provided he is put in a damp place.

Unluckily for himself, but luckily for us, the eel is capital eating, and millions of them are therefore annually stewed, fried, boiled, made into pies, and otherwise prepared for the table. Many a hungry family have had a capital meal of eels from the neighbouring "stewed eel shop;" whereas, had they been in the country, they would have had potatoes or a bit of cold bacon instead.

It seems a law of nature that every portion, both of land and water, shall have its inhabitant; and we therefore find eels living in thick muddy waters, in which other fish could not exist. The principal supply of eels for the London market is from that most mud-favoured of all countries, Holland, and a visitor to Billingsgate market is as sure to see one Dutch "skoot" or eel boat anchored in the river, as he is to see London Bridge from the same place. We recently made an expedition to one of the "skoots," to have a talk to the Dutchmen, at home among their eels. Before starting, we had been told that these Dutchmen did not like visitors; but, trusting to the efficacy of "backshish"—a pass-key to almost all natural curiosities, whether of land or water—we pulled along-side the "skoot" in a wherry, and hailed the skipper. This worthy was sitting on the anchor chains, smoking the longest clay pipe we ever saw, with his hands in the pockets of the most capacious trousers, not far short of regular corn sacks. His crew consisted of two or three men, with high cheek-bones, rings in their ears, and great wooden sabots, that made a fine clattering on the deck.

We were immediately admitted on board. After an interchange of civilities, we saw no signs of eels on the deck, till Mr. Skipper, lifting up one of the hatches, pointed downwards, and we let ourselves through a hole like a round "man-hole" of a London sewer, and there we were underneath the deck. On our left hand we saw two small tanks, not much larger than washing-tubs, which the skipper told us was "the place for the eels." We could not understand how this could be, till it was explained that there was a false bottom, running the whole length and breadth of the boat, and that these were only the communications to it; when the eels were wanted, they were fished out by means of a net fixed to a curved pole, which could reach every corner of the reservoir.

The fishermen in Holland collect the eels for the "skoots," and as they are brought alongside in the Texel, they are all tumbled into the reservoir; holes are bored all round the eels' apartment, and water enters freely, so that the "skoot" is in fact only a large Thames eel box with sails to it. When they have so many eels that the false bottom of the boat won't hold them, or when the boat is too heavy to float over the mud flats, they fill with eels two enormous boxes like gigantic coffins with holes

bored in their sides, and tow them along in the stern of the boat. The eels don't seem to mind the sea water a bit as they come across the Channel, and they live in it just as well as in their native fresh water; but they have a great objection to Thames water, and die very quickly in it, for it is too highly flavoured with sewage matter to agree with their delicate constitutions. Eels have not been kept alive in the "skoots" so far up the river as Billingsgate for the last forty years, and every year the boats are obliged to keep lower and lower down. They have first gone to Erith, then to Greenhithe, and now they are obliged to stop at Gravesend; the Thames water being poisonous to them above that point. Every morning row-boats bring up the eels from the "skoots" at Gravesend to the "skoot" which forms a floating fish-stall opposite Billingsgate, and here they are sold out by the pound to all comers.

We have heard of brown sugar being sanded, but not often of sanded eels. The street salesmen who buy these Dutch eels cover them with sand by way of holding them fast, but when they sell them to customers they forget to wash the sand off; so that the purchaser buys sand at the rate of about fourpence a pound with his eels.

Although the eel is such a slippery fellow, yet he has regular scales like any other fish, only they are very minute, and covered over with a thick great coat of slime-like material. The beautiful pattern formed by these scales on the skin can easily be seen if a bit of fresh skin be placed on the window glass and allowed to dry; the individual scale under the microscope presents an ornamentation which, if copied in enamel by the jewellers, would I think be highly appreciated by the ladies, for brooches, rings, etc. Jewellers and other artists often pay high prices for new patterns and models, the produce of ingenious inventors. They seem to be ignorant of the existence, or else utterly to ignore the superfluity of marvellous devices with which the great Creator has thought fit to decorate his creatures. The naturalist could point out, in the animal and vegetable kingdom, figures a thousand times more ingenious and pleasing to the eye than the most approved designs of the professor of the highest of human "high art."

The eel has a beautiful contrivance, which enables him to live longer out of the water than other fish. If an eel be watched when placed on dry land, it will be seen that he pouts out his cheeks on both sides of his face; underneath this puffed-out skin are his gills, and the skin over them is so arranged as to form a closed sack, which he fills with water, and so keeps the gill fibres moist; for it is the sticking together of these very gill fibres that literally suffocates the fish, just as if our own lungs were filled with melted glue. There is a marvellous design in this contrivance, for thereby the eel is enabled to come out of the water and to travel on the land. Eels are frequently found in out-lying ponds where no eels have ever been put by the hand of man. How did they get there? They certainly did not fly there, but nevertheless they crawled there some dark night, when the grass was all wet with dew and rain, and their slimy great-

coat would not dry up. Other fish have no pockets except their stomachs, but Mr. Eel has a pocket in which he keeps water to keep his gills in working order; and when he finds his quarters uncomfortable, he sucks in a good supply of water and is off to some other place. His snake-like mode of progression helps him not a little to get over the ground; but when his brother fish, the jack, perch, etc., find themselves on the bank, they try to get back again by a series of unmeaning, clumsy, acrobatic jumps into the air and down to the ground again.

It is, however, a fact worth everybody's noticing, that a fish taken out of the water always makes his summersaults towards the water and never away from it. I have no idea what faculty enables them to do this, for their eyes and ears are not formed to see or to hear out of the water, any more than these same organs in ourselves would be efficient if we were hooked by a big fish and put on the slab of his submarine larder as specimens of a fine day's angling.

I understand that eels are not eaten by the Scotch peasantry, on account of their snake-like form; but in the south of France they eat not only eels, but even the snakes themselves. A gentleman of my acquaintance ordering "Eels for dinner," in a small town in the south of France, was asked if he would have "*Anguilles de la haie*," *Anglice*, "eels of the hedge," i. e. snakes, or "*Anguilles de la rivière*"—"eels of the river." He did not take long to make up his mind on this point, and felt thankful that the question had been put; not but that snakes are very good eating, and look very eel-like when cut into bits and nicely dished up.

If the reader has never seen what the Thames fishermen call the "eel fare" (from the German word *fahren*, to go, to move, to ascend), he should certainly get some one next spring to let him know when it is going on, and run up to Twickenham or Teddington to see the sight. Uncountable millions of young eels are seen working their way up stream in spite of all obstacles, and even climbing over the lock gates where their passage is arrested. But, where do they all come from, and where are they going? The parent eels (provided always they escape the numerous "eel butts" or baskets set for them in their progress) go down to the mouth of the river, deposit their spawn in the soft warm mud, where in due course of time it becomes hatched, and then a wonderful instinct compels the delicate fry to ascend the river, in order to stock both it and also the streams and rivulets that run into it. The result of the mixture of the fresh water with the sea water is a considerable increase of temperature, so that the mud at the mouths of rivers, heated by this cause, becomes a natural hot-bed for the maturation of the eggs of the eel deposited therein. In this wonderful provision we see that mud flats, which to our eyes are apparently useless, are set to work by the hand of Nature, and made to produce "crops of fish" for the benefit of man, who too often neither knows nor cares to inquire into the simple causes upon which so much of his well-being depends.



## VARIETIES.

**RISKS OF RAILWAY TRAVELLING.**—In the year 1858, the railways of the United Kingdom carried 139,193,699 passengers. Of these, 26 were killed, and 419 returned as "more or less injured;" but the latter number, we know from our own observation, is understated, as many cases of slight injury are not made public. In the matter of "life and limb," the figure 445 may be taken as in the railway official returns. This gives only 1 case in 5,000,000 of a fatal result, and 1 in 300,000 of personal injury. Of the 26 deaths, there were 17, and of the 419 injuries 52 occurred to servants or workmen of the railway companies. The deaths from accidents are thus reduced for the year to 1 in about 15 millions and a half.

**HONITON LACE.**—A correspondent at Honiton sends us the following note:—In the article on English Lace, in No. 374, page 122, there is a slight reference to Honiton lace; and readers unacquainted with this beautiful fabric may be led to suppose that it is of comparatively recent introduction. It is more than probable that we owe this art, with many others, to popish persecution abroad. "The Duke of Alva, under Philip II, in his sanguinary attempts to exterminate Protestantism in the Netherlands, was guilty of the most dreadful cruelties; multitudes of all ranks were thrown into confinement, and thence delivered to the executioner; nothing was heard of but confiscation, imprisonment, exile, torture, and death. Queen Elizabeth gave protection to all the Flemish exiles who took shelter in her dominions, as many of them were the most industrious inhabitants of the Netherlands, and had rendered that country celebrated for its arts; she reaped the advantage of introducing into England some useful manufactures, which the Queen wisely knew to be the elements of national wealth." In confirmation of this historical evidence, there is the testimony of Lysons, who wrote about seventy years ago. Lysons says that the making of lace, for which Honiton has long been celebrated, was introduced into England by the Lollards from Flanders, and that the thread of which the best lace is made comes from Antwerp; and in his day, the market price was £70 the pound weight. In further corroboration of the fact that lace has long been made in Honiton, there is in the church-yard a monument with the following inscription: "Here lyeth y<sup>e</sup> Body of James Rodge, of Honiton, in the county of Devonshire, Bone Lace Siller. Hath given unto the Poore of Honiton The Benefit of 100£ For Ever. Who deceased y<sup>e</sup> 27th of July, A.D. 1617. Aged 50. Remember the Poore."

**LETTERS DAMAGED BY SEA-WATER.**—The letter should be lightly once brushed over with diluted muriatic acid, the strength as sold as such at all chemists' shops. As soon as the paper is thoroughly damped, it must be again brushed over with a saturated solution of yellow ferruginate of potash, when immediately the writing appears in Prussian blue. In this latter operation plenty of the liquid should be employed, and care must be taken that the brush be not used so roughly as to tear the surface of the paper. This result is obtained by simple chemical laws, as the iron which existed in the writing ink is retained in the fibre of the paper, and, by the action of ferruginate of potash, Prussian blue is formed, the use of the muriatic acid being simply to place the iron under circumstances favourable to the action of the ferruginate of potash. The letter should then be washed in a basin of clean water, and dried first between the folds of blotting paper, and subsequently by holding it before the fire, when the letter is fit for the counting-house. If the letter should be of much permanent value, I recommend it to be carefully sized with a solution of isinglass before being filed; but if the paper has been much rotted, the operation requires care, and should not be done until a notarial copy or photograph has been taken. Where the operation is to be conducted by those having some knowledge of chemistry, a little of the solution of the red

ferruginate of potash may be added to the yellow, as in some cases it would render the colour more complex.—*Mr. Alfred Smee, of the Bank of England.*

**SIR JOSEPH PAXTON'S POTTING-SHED AT SYDENHAM.**—The number of plants that are propagated here every season is immense; and one instance will prove that it is so. Take, for instance, Mangle's Variegated Geranium, cuttings of which are struck in boxes in one side of one of the two houses. The boxes are all of one size, three feet six inches long, one foot wide, and three inches deep inside. They are filled with light soil and covered with sand; each box holds 132 cuttings, which remain in the same box all the winter, to be potted off at the end of February or early in March. There are eighty of these boxes filled with Mangle's; then 132 cuttings in one box, multiplied by 80 boxes, gives 10,560 plants. From that to 12,000 are the annual stock of this one kind.

**KEEP YOUR PLANTS CLEAN.**—The transpiration takes place from the upper surfaces of the leaves; and, if these surfaces are coated with varnish, the leaves gradually decay and fall, and the growth of the plant ceases until fresh leaves are produced. Hence arises the benefit which plants derive in rooms, greenhouses, and other confined inclosures from keeping those surfaces cleansed with the sponge and syringe. The advantage derived by plants from having their leaves cleansed was exemplified by the following experiment:—Two orange-trees, weighing respectively eighteen ounces and twenty ounces, were allowed to vegetate without their leaves being cleansed for a whole twelvemonth; and two others, weighing nineteen ounces and twenty ounces and a half each, had their leaves sponged with tepid water once a week; the two first increased in weight less than half an ounce each, whilst of the two latter, one had increased two, and the other nearly three ounces. In all other respects they had been treated similarly.—*The Cottage Gardener.*

**TRELLIS-WORK GERMAN CUSHION COVER.**—Having ascertained the size of the cushion for which the cover is intended to be made, rule it from cross corners each way, so as to form it into diamonds, measuring two inches on every side; then take a good white cotton braid of half an inch wide and lay it down on every line, so as to form a diamond trellis-work. Take as many pieces of fine linen as will cover every point, trace upon it the size of a sixpence, divide the round into four scallops, tack them down on the points of the diamonds, and work all round both on the braid and linen with button-hole stitch, and on the central point a spot well raised of the size of a small pea. All this being done, remove the trellis from the paper, cut out the superfluous parts from the linen, and the work will be completed. The cotton to be used may be either ingrained red or white embroidery cotton. Simple as these covers are, they have a very pretty effect when laid over a coloured cushion, as the openings between the trellis-work show the under material to much advantage. They also give a very good effect to a modest material for the under cover, as, if it be only of ingrained red cotton or a plain moreen, this outer cover adds to it the effect of a pretty pattern and a lively contrast.—*The Lady's Newspaper.*

**NEW USE FOR SAWDUST.**—The ingenuity of Parisian cabinet-makers has found a use for common sawdust which raises the value of that commodity far above the worth of solid timber. By a new process, combining the hydraulic press and the application of intense heat, these wooden particles are made to reform themselves into a solid mass capable of being moulded into any shape, and presenting a brilliant surface, with a durability and beauty of appearance not found in ebony, rosewood, or mahogany.